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## NOTES AND QUERIES.

**SPITTING ON THE HANDS** (vol. iii. pp. 58, 161).—Spitting on the palms of the hands, and then rubbing them together, was a common thing with wood-sawyers and wood-splitters a few years ago, when wood was more generally used for fuel than it has been of late years.

I have often seen laboring men, in shovelling snow, use the same practice. I noticed, in my boyhood, that when any of the boys were about to run, or jump over a fence, they would invariably spit upon their palms, or make a motion something like spitting, and do the same thing whenever they were about to attempt any movement requiring extra strength of either arms or legs. I have done the same thing myself. I think most men in this vicinity must be familiar with this, and I do not know that the practice was confined to this locality. It seems to be a sort of deliberating or gathering of strength, before making any attempt at running or jumping. I have observed that men do this same thing in the game of "ten-pins" or any games of that character.

But a most singular illustration of the peculiarity referred to occurs to me. I have been told that it is a fact, although I cannot myself vouch for it, as ever having seen it, — that journeymen bread-bakers, sometimes in working up their dough, begin, perhaps without thinking much about it, by first rolling up their shirt sleeves, and then spitting upon the palms, prepare for an outlay of strength upon the mixture of flour and water. It may be the result of early habits and practices, which we all know are hard to change. This strikes us of course as very disgusting; but perhaps if we were "behind the scenes," in many shops and kitchens, we should notice things quite as disagreeable. I think the latter practice described shows that the object was not as some suppose, to make the hands stick to anything, but as I have said, it is a mere habit which had come originally from a kind of gathering strength by rubbing the hands together, and the spitting was often no more than a motion of the lips indicating that one could not get away from his old boyish habit.

*Henry M. Brooks.*

SALEM, MASS., July 8, 1890.

**GYPSY SORCERY, MAGIC, AND FORTUNE-TELLING.**—This work will be published by T. Fisher Unwin, London, in the form of an *édition de luxe*, of which only 150 copies will be printed, price one guinea. Each copy will be numbered and signed. The edition will be on the best paper with large ornamental initials, etc., drawn by the author. The book is dedicated to the French Folk-lorists of the *Congrès des Traditions populaires* (1889), as a token of gratitude for hospitality.

As an example of the increase in value of limited editions, it may be remarked that the completed volumes of the Journal of the Gypsy Folk-Lore Society, of which only 150 copies are printed, now sell at more than double price.

Mr. Leland is to have charge of the next meeting of this Congress, which is to be held in London during the following year; every measure will be taken to render the occasion agreeable to American visitors, and it is hoped that the American Folk-Lore Society may be represented.

TO KILL CATS IS UNLUCKY. — Yesterday, while cutting hay, the machine caught a cat, and cut off all four legs of the poor creature. The Irishman in charge threw the animal over the fence. In an hour or two the neighbors found it, and threw it back, saying, "He can't put off his bad luck on me, — I'll not kill his cats for him." Accordingly, the poor thing was tossed to and fro, until I heard of the matter, and found a man who happened to be of American birth, to put an end to the animal's pain. As he killed it he said, "I ain't superstitious, but no Irishman will ever kill a cat."

Mary H. Skeel, Newburgh, N. Y.

VOODOO AND VODUN. — Reading with interest the papers on "Voodooism" in the various numbers of the Journal of American Folk-Lore, I observe this remark: "When human testimony is so defective, it is natural to regard the evidence of language. In an African superstition, one would expect the survival of some African words and phrases."

The word Voodoo itself, however, seems to be African, and to be used in a similar sense. In Featherman's "Social History of the Races of Mankind," volume on the Nigritians, p. 216, it is stated, that, in Dahomey, "Vodun or Vodum is the name for any object considered as fetish in the sense of a protecting talisman." With this fact may be compared the special use of Voodoo or Hoodoo in the United States as meaning that which brings good luck (vol. i. p. 17, note).

As to the worship of these same people, we are told that the snake is with them the highest divinity. It symbolizes supreme bliss and universal benevolence. Reverential honors are paid to a number of them sheltered in a fetish house. They are piously cared for by female devotees, who feed them and present offerings of silk stuffs, bullocks, goats, fowls, cloth, rum, etc. They are considered so sacred that a girl who accidentally touches one becomes possessed, and is at once a consecrated person, being taken from her parents to be taught the arts of singing and dancing, which constitute the ritual of the snake divinity. The evening and night are mentioned as the usual time for the young girls to become possessed (Nigritians, pp. 214, 215).

Louise Kennedy, Concord, Mass.

(The corresponding verb *envaudouiller*, to bewitch, seems sufficient to mark *vaudou* as of French origin. As for Vodun, it may resemble *vaudou* in sound, yet have no etymological relationship. Such similarities are misleading. What does seem to appear more clearly, the more we know of the matter, is the close correspondence of European and African belief in regard to witchcraft and magic. — W. W. N.)